



Neighborhood Networks Week  
June 25–30, 2007



# *Neighborhood Networks Week*

## *Winning Essays*

**Neighborhood Networks:  
Connecting Residents to Opportunities**



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## ***Listing of All Essay Winners***

***Overall winner: La Tonya Porter  
Green Hills Computer Learning Center, Knoxville, TN***

<b>Age Category</b>	<b>Place</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Center Name and Location</b>
<b>6-12</b>	<b>First</b>	<b>Da’Joun Remmer</b>	<b>Vesta-Rainbow Terrace Learning Center, Cleveland, OH</b>
	<b>Second</b>	<b>Lendarrius Prichett</b>	<b>Dauphin Gate Neighborhood Networks Center, Mobile, AL</b>
	<b>Third</b>	<b>Elaine Florence</b>	<b>Lavergne Court Learning Center/ Mercy Housing Resident Lab Technology center, Chicago, IL</b>
<b>13-17</b>	<b>First</b>	<b>Ke’Aira A. Reeder</b>	<b>Vesta-Rainbow Terrace Learning Center, Cleveland, OH</b>
	<b>Second</b>	<b>Irene Nesterenko</b>	<b>Bucks County Country Commons Family Center, Bensalem, PA</b>
	<b>Third</b>	<b>Damario Davis</b>	<b>Lavergne Court Learning Center/ Mercy Housing Resident lab Technology Center, Chicago, IL</b>
<b>18-64</b>	<b>First</b>	<b>LaTonya Porter</b>	<b>Green Hills Computer Learning Center, Knoxville, TN</b>
	<b>Second</b>	<b>Tanisha Hartsfield</b>	<b>NIA/Amity Heights Neighborhood Networks Computer Learning Center, Bridgeton, NJ</b>
	<b>Third</b>	<b>Adelaide Jackson</b>	<b>Cathedral Place Neighborhood Networks Center, Mobile, AL</b>
<b>65+</b>	<b>First</b>	<b>Minnie W. Novitzki</b>	<b>Plough Towers, Memphis, TN</b>
	<b>Second</b>	<b>Judith Schubert</b>	<b>Brookside Computer Learning Center, Parsippany, NY</b>
	<b>Third</b>	<b>Alexander Yershovich</b>	<b>Bucks County Country Commons Family Center, Bensalem, PA</b>

**Title:** My Life at the Learning Center

**Author:** Da’Joun Remmer

**Age:** 9

**Neighborhood Networks Center:** Vesta-Rainbow Terrace

Learning Center, Cleveland, OH

**Center Contact:** Ms. Bridgette Smith



My name is Da’Joun Remmer and every day after school I come to Rainbow Terrace Learning Center to do my work. I have been coming here since 1<sup>st</sup> grade. They helped me to be what I am today, a fourth grade young man with a good education. They made me realize if you’re in the fourth grade and do what fifth and sixth graders do, you can do any thing you put your mind to.

We learn a lot of things at the learning center, but the thing I like the most is multiplication. I love multiplication because every time you multiply a different pair of numbers you get a different answer and every time you do that you are learning something new. Being at the learning center is fun, like last summer vacation. I learned something every Friday at the learning center on summer vacation and it was that you should respect your neighborhood and keep it clean and I will always remember that. A whole lot of people learned that because of Bridgette, Trayvia, and Nike. They made me realize that if I keep on doing good in school, I can achieve any of my goals to become a professional football player and go into real estate.

Rainbow Terrace Learning Center is a great place to learn and have fun. One day in the future I hope kids go to a learning center and learn and have fun like I have. I am still going to try to be the star student of the year. Every time I come to the learning center people like me for who I am. Rainbow Terrace Learning Center is a great place to make friends. I made friends with Donnie, Raymond, Timothy, Harold, Rolyesha, Phantashia, Alexandria, Dennis, and Nina. I hope they make lots of new learning centers in Cleveland, Ohio. I get an education and learn something new every day at the learning Center.

I come here to learn something new and get an education. I love Rainbow Terrace Learning Center and the people who work there.

**Title:** How Has My Neighborhood Networks Center Connected Me to Opportunities?

**Author:** Lendarrius Prichett

**Age:** 12

**Neighborhood Networks Center:** Dauphin Gate Neighborhood Networks Center, Mobile, AL

**Center Contact:** Dee Edwards



The Neighborhood Networks Center has helped me develop into a better person in life. I have been coming for a long time and it has helped me a lot. I come to do homework, and pull my grades up in school. The parties are fun and awesome. The director, Ms. Dee has been the greatest for the past years. I especially like the computer books that Ms. Dee has created for us which are very easy and fun learning. Ms. Dee is very strict on us learning and she will not allow us our fun day for the week unless we finish our computer learning assignments that she gives us weekly.

The Network Center is a fun place because we do not have a playground. Ms. Dee is always having fun activities for us to do. We have parties for each holiday occasion, summer programs, and the most fun of all each year is when Ms. Dee gives us an out of school barbeque party where we have barbeque, games and a rented pool! I enjoy coming to the Network Center and look forward to getting out of school to see what activities are planned for us.

I often mention to my school our apartment complex having a Neighborhood Networks Center and the advantage that it has. I do not have a computer at home and the Center helps me a lot in my studies. A lot of my friends live in an apartment complex and they do not have a Neighborhood Networks Center that has a computer. I like when we have friend invite day, and Ms. Dee allows us to bring a friend to our Center that does not have a computer at home and she allows our friends to attend our party activities.

I look up to my Network Center because I am proud that I have somewhere to go where I can learn and have fun. At times it gets hard because Ms. Dee does not allow us in if we do not complete computer assignments. My computer knowledge has gotten a lot better because of our Network Center. I want our center to be here always.

**Title:** How Has My Neighborhood Networks Center Connected Me to Opportunities?

**Author:** Elaine Florence

**Age:** 12

**Neighborhood Networks Center:** Lavergne Court Learning Center/  
Mercy Housing Resident Lab Technology Center, Chicago, IL

**Center Contact:** Rose Mabwa



### **My name is ELAINE FLORENCE**

I come to this program every day and do my work and think about my career and many different things I would love to do in life.

Our After School Program center has eleven computers with access to the Internet. Having access to the Internet helps us get better grades because we can do research that is needed to do our homework. The information is very plentiful and helpful and it is good for us to take advantage of. I am currently working on a newsletter for our center. It is a good learning experience.

### **Success in School**

In my school we have programs like music and, gym, library but in my home class room we do math. I am very good in math and half of the time in other stuff but my special subject is math. The program I go to is called the Neighborhood Networks Mercy Housing Resident Lab and the owner is a good worker and her name is Rose Mabwa. She assigns students to do many things in life like college and to go to high school. She has helped me with many different things like my homework and gave me a tutor. I have been doing very good, but this quarter I have been doing very bad but I will bring it up as fast as I can.

### **MY CAREER**

In my career I want to be a nurse and this program has helped me a lot. At school I am on the honor roll and have perfect attendance and I have been following along in school. I can do something in life and if I get my GED and to do everything I need to do. I can be any thing and do anything I want to do I would just have to watch everything I do and say.

**Title:** My Story**Author:** Ke'Aira A. Reeder**Age:** 14**Neighborhood Networks Center:** Vesta-Rainbow Terrace

Learning Center, Cleveland, OH

**Center Contact:** Ms. Bridgette Smith

My name is Ke'Aira A. Reeder. I am 14 years old in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. My Neighborhood Networks Center has connected me to numerous beneficial opportunities. Attending the establishment has helped me to focus on my future. I have been inducted into the National Junior Honor Society for two consecutive years, which opens doors to the National Honor Society and looks extremely well when looking for acceptance to colleges. I would not have been introduced to any such opportunities if Ms. Bridgette Smith hadn't helped me recognize the importance of being in such an organization, and helped to keep me focused, and simply showed me she cared. I have happily accepted several awards from Rainbow Terrace Learning Center including: 2 Certificates of Academic Excellence and Achievement which is where I improved grades in two or more subjects and/or maintained a 3.5 grade point average or above, a Certificate of Recognition for volunteering in Smarter Summer programs, and many more.

In Garden Valley there aren't many people who accomplish much. My Neighborhood Networks Center has helped to better so many of my peers and help them to create a better focus on life. People like Ms. Smith are hard to find. She doesn't have to care about us, but she does. Ms. Smith could just come, do her job, and just leave. Her job is to add supplement to our education while introducing us to computer technology. Ms. Smith has helped me better my education, and am involved in numerous programs provided; such as a computer class where I learned how to make a web page. So there is proof that she does her job, but she does so much more. There have been quite a few workers at Rainbow Terrace Learning Center, but I cannot honestly say that they all had nor have a passion for helping other as she does. Ms. Smith wants to better the community and do what she can to help everyone become something in life. She has helped me to understand that I don't have to be like stereotypical 14 year olds. I don't have sex, I don't do drugs, and I'm not worried about boys. I was blessed to have a family that pushed me to strive for more. Everyone in Garden Valley doesn't have that. For some, Garden Valley is all the family they have. I have lived down here all my life and witnessed first hand how people throw their lives away. Then again I have witnessed first hand many people turn their lives around with the help of the Neighborhood Networks Center. I saw a girl who was making D's and F's in school come in the learning center on a daily basis, and make A's and B's and become the MOST IMPROVED STUDENT OF THE YEAR. I have seen a black male named Jamaun Riggins

(Nike) who come in the learning center graduated from high school, attended college, got a job, and still came every day during the summer to help the younger kids, all with the help of Ms. Smith, so it can be done. Without our Neighborhood Networks Center many of us would not have accomplished many of the things we did. Our learning center helps to keep us out of trouble. I hardly ever thought about what I wanted to be when I grew up, or what college I wanted to go to, or what I had to do to get in, or even what I had to maintain to stay in college. Then with the help of the property manager of Rainbow Terrace Ms. Paige and the site coordinator Ms. Smith I had to do an assignment where I researched what I wanted to do and so forth. With the help of that assignment I know that I Ke'Aira Aushai Reeder want to be an Aquatics Therapist. I want to attend Spelman College, and to attend that college I must have an average ACT score of 23, and average SAT score (combined verbal and math) of 1089, and an average GPA of 3.6. Also that academic performance is one of the most important factors considered in the admission decision.

Some may think that it is too late to save our community, but in Ms. Smith's eyes it's never too late. Anytime she can see a light she wants to show somebody else a light. She also helped to restore hope in us. I chose the clocks for my border because I think the TIME IS NOW. I think that with more programs and establishments like Rainbow Terrace Learning Center so many more people can be saved.

I was skeptical about writing so much more, and I hope my essay can still be accepted. There was just so much more I had to tell. The paper says that EVERYONE HAD A STORY. My story could not be minimized to 600 words and it is about a little over 800. THAT'S MY STORY!!

**Title:** Neighborhood Resource Center

**Author:** Irene Nesterenko

**Age:** 14

**Neighborhood Networks Center:** Bucks County Country

Commons Family Center, Bensalem, PA

**Center Contact:** Lidia Kolodub



Tech Girls is the first program that I have attended in the Country Commons Community Center but it is definitely not the last! I knew that the community center held lots of events during the year; in the summer I saw lots of kids going to the summer programs, and I knew that there were programs after school, but I never felt an interest until I heard of some new classes they were offering. I spend a lot of my time on the computer, so I thought that I knew plenty about it already, but when I came to the computer class, I found out that what I knew was only a tiny part of everything that there is to know.

I was extremely excited when I scrolled through the Microsoft Worlds tutorial and saw that the last lesson was a quiz maker. I enjoy taking online quizzes, so you can imagine my excitement when I found out I would actually be able to make one myself! The quiz lesson turned out to be my favorite out of all the others. Making the quizzes was my favorite thing to do because I love trivia stuff, and also because it gave me a chance to exercise what I had learned from all of the previous lessons, things like turtles and animations and giving commands and making programs and all of that good stuff.

Tech Girls is an awesome way to make new friendships and build stronger ones. Many of the girls in the class I had seen outside of the community room, but I had never taken the time to get to know them, or to ask their names or anything like that. We had lots of fun times, and I look forward every week to meeting with them and learning new things together. Of course, everything is not all blue skies and green lights all of the time, and sometimes we got on each other's nerves, but we try to accept our differences and concentrate on what is important.

I learned something that I feel is the most important lesson of all. A community isn't just a bunch of houses that happened to be placed together, but instead, a community is a group of people that care about each other. They never too busy to help each other out, and are always there for each other, no matter what. Community means good neighbors, who are also great friends. Community doesn't depend on a clean yard or trimmed lawns, or even pretty houses. Community can exist anywhere, if people have the will to work towards it. Sometimes people forget that, and they focus on the trivial things instead of the things that count.

I think that out of all the things I learned during the past couple months, this lesson about what Community really means will stay with me the longest. There are so many things I learned, and what I learned made me realize how much there is left to learn out there. This program was only a tiny part of something so much bigger. As I worked on the weekly projects, I kept on thinking of how much technology went into creating this simple project. A century ago, this kind of stuff was probably unheard of. I felt privileged to be able to have this opportunity to study and learn these projects.

The community center opened up the opportunity of greater knowledge for me. I love learning new things and the community center is an awesome place to learn. I want to be a psychiatrist someday, so the center gave me the opportunity to know more people and learn how to deal with both good times and bad times. I loved the fact that there is more to know in the world, and I know that I have the chance to learn so much through the guidance of people like Miss Lydia, the computer class teacher, in school and my parents. The opportunity of knowledge is an awesome thing, and I am grateful that this opportunity is open to me.

**Title:** Technology Access and Success In School

**Author:** Damario Davis

**Age:** 13

**Neighborhood Networks Center:** Lavergne Court Learning Center/  
Mercy Housing Resident Lab Technology Center, Chicago, IL

**Center Contact:** Rose Mabwa



### **TECHNOLOGY ACCESS**

Technology access has allowed me to better my skills at using computers. I now know how to surf the Internet to do everything I need for school work and entertainment. I know how to get information for my research that I usually work on. I usually use technology to set up personal email accounts and secure other people's accounts. And by doing that it can lead me to a great career and a better life. Also by having these skills I can help a lot of people with dealing with computers and can get paid for it.

### **SUCCESS IN SCHOOL**

Knowing how to use the internet has made my school work much easier for me and saves me more time. It helps me save things on a disk that I sometimes forget for intense school work or essays. Also it helps me look up research things that can help me answer or figure out hard answers. One other thing is that it helps spell and define words that I cannot spell.

### **MY CAREER**

When I grow up I want to be a lawyer and knowing how to use a computer can give me the tools and skills that are necessary to be ready to deal with the world and its challenges. Having places like the Mercy Housing Resident can help me with things for my future career like my reading, math, and other important things. Since I learned how to use the computer it helps me look up law schools to become a lawyer.

**Title:** How Has My Neighborhood Networks Center Connected Me to Opportunities?

**Author:** LaTonya Porter

**Age:** 33

**Neighborhood Networks Center:** Green Hills Computer Learning Center, Knoxville, TN

**Center Contact:** Diana Caldwell



In Webster's Dictionary, the meaning of the word opportunity is stated as "a favorable or promising combination of circumstances—a chance for advancement or improvement." Each of these definitions applies to what our Green Hills Learning Center has provided my family and me. Living on government assistance, I feel I am a burden to society. Often, the question in everyone's mind is what is the answer for people like me. The standard answer is "they all need to get a job." This sounds great and appears to be an easy solution. Presto! No more welfare or government programs and no more people in need of subsidized housing, food stamps, etc. This isn't the answer. If a parent on government assistance obtains full-time employment at a minimum wage of \$5.25 per hour, their benefits are either cut totally out, or are reduced drastically, necessitating an environment wherein the family has less than they did before gaining employment. I grew up in poverty, surrounded by family, neighbors and friends all pretty much living on government assistance. Upon reaching adulthood, I moved back into Green Hills, just my baby and me, expecting governmental and charitable agencies to support us.

I lived part of my childhood years in Green Hills Apartments. At that time there was no Green Hills Learning Center. When I returned to Green Hills as a young adult, I found myself in a very depressed state of mind and made a dreadfully poor decision that almost cost me my children and my freedom. I lived in subsidized housing, received food stamps, AFDC, etc., but I had no money coming in and was living hand-to-mouth each month. With two small children by then, I thought that the only way to provide my children with material things that other children had was to adopt the lifestyle of my environment and sell drugs. Though illegal, the drug monies allowed me a temporary sense of pride. For a short time I was able to pay utility, telephone and other bills and could purchase clothing without having to beg for anyone's help without feeling obligated to return the favor in some manner. This was a very bad decision and I paid the price for having made it. As a result, I was placed on probation and ordered to perform community service.

Prior to this, I knew there was a Green Hills Learning Center, but I was busy on my path to crime. Once I was caught, I decided to go and check out the Green Hills Learning Center in hopes that I might be able to perform my community service through them.

Today, I am so thankful that I was caught because I have my children, my freedom, and have gained and utilized so many opportunities provided by the Green Hills Learning Center. I have found that while I will always believe that society plays a major contributing role in shaping peoples lives, that agencies such as the Green Hills Learning Center are one part of government assistance that should never be reduced.

The Green Hills Learning Center has given me and my family so many opportunities to expand our beliefs in ourselves and the courage and motivation to not just accept that this is our circumstances, but to push ourselves to get ahead and transition from a life of dependency to a life of self-sufficiency. I have learned Microsoft Word, Microsoft Access, and Microsoft Excel. These programs are truly helping me in my quest for my college degree in computer programming and networking technology. I have completed two years towards my degree and cannot help but brag about our center when others admire my skills and success. Two years ago, the director of the Green Hills Learning Center, Diana Caldwell, encouraged me and other residents to write a grant application for supplemental food items through a local agency called FISH. As a result, FISH approved our first request for a \$500 grant, which allowed us to purchase canned food, toiletry items and bread for several households. It was my first time ever writing a grant proposal and it would not have been possible had it not been for the opportunity provided by the Green Hills Learning Center to learn computer skills, and if the Green Hills Learning Center had not encouraged me to go after it.

Even as I write this essay, I am awaiting word from the Youth Advisory Council of Knox County on whether my fourteen-year-old son will be accepted by their agency. If he is accepted, he will be a member of an elite group of teens who will give their input in government meetings and to other agencies as to what hindrances kids of our cultural environment face each day. With out the Green Hills Learning Center, we would not have known anything about the Youth Advisory Council or this opening.

The Green Hills Learning Center has given me the opportunity to explore myself without passing judgment on past decisions. Our center has a motto and I, for one, definitely agree with it. It is the belief of the Green Hills Learning Center that before you can teach the mind, you must first touch the heart. I find this is true because had the learning center pre-judged me based upon past behavior, then the opportunities they have provided me would have been to no avail. I think of our learning center as a smorgasbord. Our center provides the opportunities and it is up to each individual whether or not they will partake of the feast spread before them.

I cannot change yesterday, but through the efforts of the Green Hills Learning Center and the opportunities shared, I am staying focused on the success of tomorrow. Regardless of where my life's path takes me, I will always recall how one bad decision resulted in a positive learning experience that will last a lifetime.

**Title:** How Has My Neighborhood Networks Center Connected Me to Opportunities?

**Author:** Tanisha Hartsfield

**Age:** 32

**Neighborhood Networks Center:** NIA/Amity Heights Neighborhood Networks Computer Learning Center, Bridgeton, NJ

**Center Contact:** Mr. Wayne Roberts



Whoever said your first impression should be your best impression must have come in contact with Mr. Roberts. Mr. Roberts is the computer facilitator of the NIA/Amity Heights Apartment located in Bridgeton, New Jersey where I live. I met Mr. Roberts at what I thought was the down point of my life. I remember receiving a NIA newsletter taped to my apartment door. Usually I never looked over the newsletter, I always threw them to the side until I eventually threw them in the trash.

But for some reason, this newsletter caught my attention and I actually began to read it. I saw a flyer within the newsletter offering an after school program for children along with other activities for adults. Activities such as “come meet your neighbors”, food and clothing give-a-ways for large families and single parents families in need, activities that somehow made the adults interact with not just their own kids but the kids that lived in the neighborhood. Oh yeah! The newsletter also mentioned something about computers. That’s how and when I met Mr. Roberts. Finding out at the time my 14-month-old-daughter had Cerebral Palsy with severe PVL (a long word kind of hard to pronounce), kind of like isolated me and I was mad at everyone, myself included. Then I realized anger, blame and being frozen wasn’t getting me those answers and help my daughter and I deserved and desperately needed.

So I made a visit to the Neighborhood Networks Computer Training Center located at the rental office, totally clueless about what it is I’m looking for or trying to find and I was definitely a virgin to the world of computers. Not even a minute in the door of Mr. Roberts Neighborhood Networks Computer Training Center, a voice greets me by saying, “Welcome and what can I do to brighten up your day?” He then introduces himself as Mr. Roberts the computer facilitator of NIA/Amity Heights Apartments and wanted to know how he maybe of some assistance to me. And it was that day that changed everything.

To make a long story short I made trips to the rental office and slowly but surely I began to break down that wall of computer fear and began to open up to Mr. Roberts. Whether he was listening or not I still came to him for advice, conversation, and computer lessons. Well I look at the computer lessons as therapy; it was through meeting

Mr. Roberts that gave me the crutches I needed to get back up and start walking again. And shortly on my own 2 feet. I was supposed to be making a long story short right? Ha Ha!

Well I guess if I had to answer how my Neighborhood Networks center connected me to opportunities? I would have to say, it was through times such as these that I gained the opportunity to take back my life, seize control over my daughter's well being, and opening windows to what ever the enter button opens. I am presently a full time online college student at the University of Phoenix. I utilize the computer-training center three, four, and sometimes five day's a week. I am currently a freshman entering my third quarter with a 3.5 GPA to date. I only have one regret and that is most of my courses deal with software programs that I could have taken at Neighborhood Networks free of charge. Just as the brochure states, "We provide quality and superior training to qualified individuals at Zero cost to the student." There are times in all of our lives that we say, "If I knew then, what I know now, life as a full time college student would have been a lot easier."

If Mr. Roberts ever gets wind to this, I want to say to him thank you for being patient, sometimes a listener, a supporter, but most and importantly, thank you for being a friend. And in return you have gained 3 (friends).

**Title:** How Has My Neighborhood Networks Center Connected Me to Opportunities?

**Author:** Adelaide Jackson

**Age:** 60

**Neighborhood Networks Center:** Cathedral Place Neighborhood Networks Center, Mobile, AL

**Center Contact:** Dee Edwards



I enjoy the computer classes Dee Edwards teaches. When I started in the class I didn't know how to use a computer at all. I am a faster learner and was intimidated at first. I found out that I could talk to my distant loved ones through a world I never new existed, the Internet! It is so rewarding to receive mail from my loved ones through the computer. At first I use to wait on the mailman to receive a card or letter from distant and local loved ones, and now because of our Neighborhood Networks Center, I can stay connected to my loved ones with just a ride on the elevator. It is so much fun to me now.

Our Neighborhood Networks Center has only been open a little over a year now, and I would not go there because I did not know anything about that world. Dee Edwards attends weekly to ensure that we the elderly and disabled receive the training and knowledge that we need. My granddaughter use to laugh at me because I did not how to use a computer. Now I can show her the certificate that I have received from Ms. Dee for my accomplishments in learning the basics of computer and Internet. I am so tickled about my knowledge of the Internet and find that having my very own email account has become one of my best friends. Words cannot express how it feels when I open my email and receive a funny card, words of encouragement or just a note from a friend or loved one. Mail that would normally take days to receive; now because of our Neighborhood Networks Center I can receive all the mail I want. I am so thrilled about my email account, at times I am sad when I do not receive mail. I call up my friends and loved ones and say, "Hey where's my mail"! I remind them that it is cheaper that way because our Internet is free and is saves me money on long distance. Why do I need a telephone anymore? Seriously thinking about calling ole Southern Bell and report to them I no longer need their services.

My Neighborhood Networks Center has opened a new world of hope for a sweet, fun relationship for me with my friends and family, I think email is the best! I can send e-cards, I was even taught by Ms. Dee how to scan pictures to send to friends and family without the mailman, and I can receive pictures of my grandchildren as they grow without the mailman, it only takes a second when U.S. mail takes days. I am getting older now and don't like going out much, but I sure like dressing up to go to

our Neighborhood Network Center to see what lies behind my email world or the fun computer activities that our Computer teacher Ms. Dee Edwards has for us. Hey, I am thinking about firing my mailman and Southern Bell.

Our teacher Dee Edwards is so patient with me even when I ask her the same question over and over. My memory is not the greatest but I sure want to know more about this computer world. But she is always patient with me and always has a smile, even when I know that I am getting on her nerves. She needs to be prepared because I want to learn more and more. My husband gets mad at me at times because he says I spend too much time in the computer lab and gets jealous when I get dressed up just to go to the Neighborhood Networks Center. I am happy when I know that I am going to the Neighborhood Networks Center and find that each time there is more of that world to learn and I grow and grow and want to stay and stay. I also found out that I can do all sorts of searches without the yellow pages. I can search for recipes, decorating ideas, and even find beauty tips for me to help improve my look for my husband. But don't tell him though. I am seriously thinking about calling up ole southern bell and canceling my phone services, firing my mailman, and throwing away all my magazines and especially the yellow book, I can now enjoy a fun way to do all my shopping, talking with friends and family and even mail. Wow! Where have I been?

When Ms. Dee asked me to write an essay about our Network Center, I did not hesitate because it gave me another opportunity to show off more skills. Yes, typing! I can type now a little because of a typing tutor called, Mavis. I am not that fast yet, but Ms. Dee better watch out because I plan on getting as fast as her. We love Ms. Dee and feel so blessed that she shares some of her with us. Thanks to Ms. Dee I stay connected with my family. And yes, they all have my email address and they better use it. Love receiving mail!

Hope that you have enjoyed this essay as much as I have enjoyed sharing it with you. Now I must go now because I have email to check and searches to perform. Hope I have mail!

**Title:** How Has My Neighborhood Networks Center Connected Me to Opportunities?

**Author:** Minnie W. Novitzki

**Age:** 84

**Neighborhood Networks Center:** Plough Towers, Memphis, TN

**Center Contact:** Rena Rosenberg



I must say my journey into the computer world has been a complete surprise to me. The computer center at Plough Towers has offered me, from the very first day I came for a lesson, an exciting opportunity to grow and develop using skills I thought I long put to rest.

My objective in signing up for classes was purely selfish. My grandchildren were beginning to go away to college and I knew to maintain any communication would require my learning how to E-mail. This was all I expected to be able to conquer and I would pat myself on the back if I succeeded.

At Class #1, I was introduced to a brand new language. I met the “mouse” and was encouraged to play Solitaire in order to become familiar with said “mouse”. Another surprise for me! I knew the children played games on their computers but I certainly never expected to use the machine for entertainment. It worked. I conquered the “mouse” and had fun doing it. As I progressed, through the patience of our most competent teacher, I became fluent in the E-mail program including making an address book and sending attachments. So much more than I ever dreamed. I had achieved my goal. I was content, but not the teacher. I was introduced to Appleworks and a whole new world I had never known existed. With the tools available, those of us who had a little artistic talent entertained ourselves with paint and clip art sometimes integrating the two into a single picture. Requests began coming in for bulletins to be used by the office. Then the card program was next and some of us began making Birthday cards for our family. With the use of so much ink and paper goods and with the teacher’s confidence in us, our director suggested that we become commercial to help pay for supplies. So we offered personalized cards for all occasions which kept those of us interested, using our creative juices on a volunteer basis of course. As we honed our skills with our teacher’s suggestions and encouragement, soon we were branching out into address labels, calling cards, invitations, thank you notes and etc. You name it and we try to do it. It worked. Our “in” basket usually has a few orders in it and the “out” a couple to be picked up.

When our printer was replaced with a photo printer, the photo program became one of our most popular money makers. (I said “ours” but of course all the intake goes into

keeping the Computer program afloat and those of us who enjoy it learning and busy.) My goal was to accomplish the E-mail program, so I stand amazed at all I have accomplished and the extreme pleasures that have been mine because of the availability of computers and the gentle, patient guidance and skills of a teacher who cares and encourages new growth. At 84, this is exciting.

I have hardly scratched the surface, but as I look back over these past few years to answer this question, I am awed by what I have absorbed. For me personally, the Appleworks program has given me the most joy and I continue to improve my skills. Looking back at my first works and what I am capable of today, even I can see great improvement. The Computer Center is a large part of my life and for that I am very grateful. It is now not purely selfish. As we age it becomes more and more important to still be useful to others. Those of us who volunteer in filling orders have this satisfaction. The "in" box usually has a request from someone in the building and being able to make someone happy is a blessing.

So you see, our leadership keeps "spreading our wings". We are never bored on the computer. Seldom a day goes by that I do not learn at least one new thing and I have not even scratched the surface of what is available. For me it has been a road I never dreamed I would travel but one that has opened up a whole new world to me and given unspeakable JOY.

**Title:** How Has My Neighborhood Networks Center Connected Me to Opportunities?

**Author:** Judith Schubert

**Age:** Age not provided

**Neighborhood Networks Center:** Brookside Computer Learning Center, Parsippany, NY

**Center Contact:** Ms. Nancy Ponzi



My name is Judith Schubert, I am a Senior Citizen residing at Brookside Residential Center, located in Parsippany, New Jersey. I have been a resident here for two years. Among the activities available to the residents are free computer lessons. Our instructor is a gentleman named Len. He provides instruction each Thursday, by appointment.

I chose to enroll in the computer course, as my knowledge was limited at best and I couldn't get past the feeling that I was missing a valuable resource for intellectual pursuits. The course is offered by the Neighborhood Networks Center and has provided me with very valuable skills I would not have been able to attain otherwise.

Learning the mechanics of the computer has been an exceptionally rewarding experience for me. I have enlarged my world immensely and have broadened my interests in so many ways. Learning word processing has met a real passion of mine, allowing me to expand activities in general writing, specifically in the area of short stories and poetry, which have become second nature to me. In addition, learning Printmaster has allowed me to make my own stationary, send greeting cards for special events and compose sympathy cards when needed. I now find myself watching far less television and working more often on my writing pursuits. At present, I have undertaken the huge task of writing a book based on my life, a task that is also proving very fulfilling. My immersing myself in this book has also provided me with an opportunity to gain great insight and understanding of my life.

Having learned to utilize the Internet for researching all topics of interest to me, I then progressed to using email to become closer to my family as well as to my friends whom I do not see very often. Just being able to get in touch with my family so quickly and efficiently is amazing to me. Even more gratifying is how quickly friends and family respond to my emails. I also have a sister-in-law who is a certified nutritionist. Very often I receive valuable information from her, which improves my quality of life.

I have been a writer for many years. I have had a poem or two published a while back. At the present time, I contribute various writings and photographs to the "Brookside Broadcaster", our local newsletter. The Neighborhood Networks Center has enabled me to utilize the computer in ways that I never could have imagined. I have found that

working on the computer is very relaxing and rewarding. Instead of being intimidated by the thought of using a computer, I have now come to perceive the computer as a friend enabling me to accomplish tasks that I never could have accomplished without this valuable tool, allowing me an opportunity to expand my pursuits in many and divergent areas.

One of the ways I have expanded the opportunities available to me is through photography, another passion of mine. I take pictures of the grounds at various seasons, throughout the year. These photos are preserved in a special album. I hope to use some of the photographs to make cards on the computer. Another way would be to frame them for use as decorations in the home.

The abundance of wildlife on the premises here also provides endless opportunities for further development. There are birds, ducks, Canadian geese, rabbits and groundhogs. The photographs I take of these animals can then be scanned into the computer and edited in any way I deem appropriate.

The Neighborhood Networks center has also expanded my circle of friends. I have met people in the computer room with whom I have common interests. In addition, by attaining computer skills, I feel that I am more in the main stream of life today.

Most people are computer literate. It is an essential part of life. At times, I have researched and printed information for websites in order to disseminate critical information to others who are not computer savvy. For example, pursuant to the latest problems resulting in the recall of Menu Foods, I researched their website, located the information I needed, printed several copies of the information, and distributed to some acquaintances who are pet owners. My gesture was greatly appreciated. In fact, one of the friends I provided a copy of the recall information was not even aware of the recall.

Other computer programs I utilize are those affording games to occupy time. I have learned and enjoy Mah Jong Madness, Spider Solitaire as well as regular Solitaire and Hearts. As a single individual living alone, there are times at which I felt very alone. These games have provided me with the opportunity to occupy those lonely times and provided me with enjoyment.

I especially wish to thank Mr. Leonard Sains, my instructor, for his excellent teaching skills as well as his patience and constant encouragement. Without Mr. Sains and the Neighborhood Networks Center located in our facility, the numerous opportunities I have been afforded would not have been possible.

I plan to continue using the computer in other ways in order to maintain what I have already learned.

**Title:** Neighborhood Resource Center

**Author:** Alexander Yershovich

**Age:** 74

**Neighborhood Networks Center:** Bucks County Country

Commons Family Center, Bensalem, PA

**Center Contact:** Lidia Kolodub



My name is Alexander Yershovich. I was born in Moscow in 1933. I came to the United State in 1990. Formerly working as a scientist engineer in a Research Institute Automobile Foundry Production, I led a very busy life. Coming to America I felt like I was nobody, and could not feel complete. It was not easy to adjust to American life. That is how I came to the Country Commons Neighborhood Networks Center.

I found that they offer many programs I can benefit from. I was not rich enough, and when the Food Bank program gave free food, I came to get it. The English language was always a great challenge, so I started to attend ESL and Citizenship Classes and became a United State Citizen in 1995. I had a computer but could not use it. When Lidia, our Resident Service Coordinator offered free computer classes, I came to get more skills. After I learned how to type and manage all the available options through the Microsoft Word program, I started to work on my first book and now I have already published six. We have also covered Excel, Internet and some Web page design options. Now I am connected with my family and friends around the world using the latest technology available. I also send my poetry to newspapers and magazines like the Philadelphia News, Jewish Life, and others.

When Lidia organized a talent show, I came to read my poetry and sing a song. When Lidia organized a Chess Competition, I came to play, and I have won three years in a row at the Senior Citizen Olympic Games in 2003, 2004, and 2006. When Lidia organized a trip to Philadelphia Museum of Art, to the Mann's Musical Center, or any other concert or a community event, I could not stay home. Now, I take part of a community life. I got involved in many other programs and activities. I feel happier, healthier, complete and satisfied. The person to thank is Lidia, our Resident Service Coordinator and to the existence of Country Commons Neighborhood Networks Center. Neighborhood is not just houses on the block; it is people, community coming together. I am also sending my little sonnet I wrote in English.

*Sonnet 65*

*The road construction. Detour. I got lost.  
Pulled my car up by an unknown sidewalk.  
I couldn't find, I didn't come across  
The real way and only sighted signboards.  
Another car stopped here next to my own.  
The driver asked: "Tell, sir, how can I help you".  
I followed him. All problems, all were done.  
I liked these strangers who gave, handed a clue.  
The setting sun was smiling just for me.  
The life and I went on again together.  
The sky was blue. And mentally I kneel  
In front of people who brought me fine weather.  
Always it not to be for you too hard  
Keep open doors to your kind soul and heart.*

*1991*

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